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Filmmakers offer a new look at this gorgeous star

Pop quiz! What do the following locations have in common?

Wrigley Field; the Skylark bar on South Halsted in Pilsen; the Artist's Cafe in the Fine Arts Building; Daley Plaza; the Riviera Theatre; Marina City; the Drake Hotel; Roosevelt University; Soldier Field; the Old Colony Building on South Dearborn; Riverside; Wrigleyville; Millennium Park; Ukrainian Village; and the Near West Side.

Those are just some of the locales that have shown up on the big screen this year in movies including "The Break-Up," "The Lake House," "Flags of Our Fathers" and "Stranger Than Fiction."

Chicago never looked so good. This has been a banner year for Chicago as a movie setting -- not just because all of the aforementioned films are worth seeing, but because the directors all found unique ways to showcase the city.

Some Chicago sites were given makeovers, e.g. the reading room at Roosevelt University being turned into an architect's studio and the Park Grill restaurant at Millennium Park being transformed into a restaurant called Il Mare in "The Lake House." In other cases, locales that have been showcased numerous times in the movies have been filmed from creative perspectives, e.g. Daley Plaza and the Picasso in "The Lake House," and just about all the exterior shots in Marc Forster's recently released fantasy-comedy "Stranger Than Fiction."

And say what you will about the unabashed sentimentality and illogical time-traveling elements in "The Lake House," it was perhaps the best cinematic tribute ever for Chicago architecture.

Vince and Jen lived here

Then there's the condo shared by Jennifer Aniston and Vince Vaughn in "The Break-Up." You're not going to be able to find it on the open market, as the entire set for the condo was constructed inside the Gen. Jones Armory at 5200 S. Cottage Grove, a working facility that was actually filled with Humvees and cannons before the filmmakers moved in.

When I was a kid, if a movie featured a recognizable city landmark, or if a title card said "CHICAGO, IL.," the audience would erupt in cheers. Over the last two decades, there have been so many films set and/or shot here that some of that thrill is gone -- but just some of it. There's still something neat about seeing your hometown up there on the big

screen -- especially when the filmmakers are giving us new angles on one of the most beautiful cities in the world.